

Reply to Mr. Bowditch.

Boston, April 2, 1868.

Dear Mr. Bowditch:

In addressing a letter to you, the other day, concerning your course at the meeting of the Jackson Trustees, I did not mean to tax you to the extent of writing even so brief a note in reply as that which I have just received from you through the post. I felt, as a co-trustee, that I could do no less, under the circumstances, unpleasant and painful as was the task. But my purpose was not epistolary discussion.

This is your reply to the various points contained in my letter:-

"Having used the larger portion of my life in working for and practising independence of speech and action, I am unable to see the occasion to put aside the habit now, and feel a right to be respected in the conscientious use of the same."

I respectfully submit that this is no answer at all. I also have endeavored to "work for and practise independence of speech and action" all my adult life; and I know how both to respect and value it to the fullest extent. But this is not the question at issue. One may act very independently, yet not in a manner to be commended, but rather reproved. I see no justification whatever for the course you are resolved to pursue in regard to Mr. Jackson's legacy; and, deeming it utterly indefensible, I could not forbear saying so, by all the obligations arising from a long established friendship, and in a faithful discharge of the trust committed to me by the testator. I do not think my letter was "uncalled for," but required; and though it was designedly plain-spoken, it certainly was not intended to be "ungenerous." Even "a friend of twenty years' standing" may not claim exemption, on that account, from earnest exhortation, or even strong reproof, in a case where he is deemed to be in the wrong. The high esteem in which I have held you

for so long a period was among the impelling motives to express my views as plainly as I did in my letter.

You speak of a "conscientious use" of your "independence of speech and action." But do you really make this a matter of conscience? I thought it related simply to a difference of opinion as to the best application of the fund for the benefit of the freedmen. I still think so; and, therefore, that conscience cannot be reasonably pleaded in opposition, nay, in inexorable resistance to the decision of the Court. Will it be sweet and quieting to your conscience to keep the legacy hidden in a napkin, and utterly unavailable, merely because you cannot have your own way? Will it trouble your conscience to see the money spent (to quote the admission of Mr. Phillips in the Standard) for "the education, elevation and protection of the people of color," through the Freedmen's Commission? This is not conceivable.

If the Court had decided (as it might have done) to give the Standard the

benefit of the entire legacy, do you think that Mr. Quincy, Mr. May, or myself, would have displayed the contumacy that you and Mr. Phillips are now doing? We should have voted instantly to have the money paid over in full, and been glad to be relieved of all further responsibility in regard to it. Why cannot you and Mr. Phillips act in the same spirit? Is it because you are more "conscientious," or more faithful to your trust, than ourselves? Make what claim you please, cast what imputations you choose, I feel confident that, in the judgment of all impartial minds, your conduct in this matter will be regarded with regret, surprise and condemnation. Instead of aiding, you are obstructing the advancement of the freedmen in that education of which they now stand in perishing need. Be the responsibility yours. It shall not be mine!

Still faithfully yours,  
Wm. Lloyd Garrison.

Wm. J. Bowditch, Esq.